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The Work of the Association of Colleges AND Secondary Schools of the Southern States

By ST. GEORGE L. SIOUSSAT

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THE WORK OF THE ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF THE SOUTHERN STATES.

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The work of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States covers a period of twenty years, a period which has seen many and great changes in all parts of the country, and in the South especially. When, on November 6, 1895, the Association was established at Atlanta, Ga., the condition of educational activity throughout the States of the South still exhibited the sorrowful effects of the war and of reconstruction. In Tennessee, for instance, the value of school property in 1894-95 was $3,092,503 as compared with $12,192,663 in 1913. In 1894-95 the total receipts of school moneys in Tennessee were $1,573,404, while in 1913 the school revenues amounted to $6,955,-934.

But even more disheartening than poverty or paucity of numbers was the lack of proper standards of estimation for educational institutions. In view of the weakness of the public school systems, it is indeed easy to see why many organizations which called themselves colleges—if they did not prefer the more ambitious term "university"—as a matter of fact, were doing the work of preparatory schools. The work had to be done, and the public schools were not ready to do it. For this there was no blame to be laid. The question was whether this state of things should be altered as soon as possible or whether the desire for numbers or mere unwillingness to advance should perpetuate it beyond the period of its necessity.

The private schools, based upon private capital, were already influential and ready to support those colleges which fully recognized the place which belonged to the schools and insisted on a clear differentiation between the two grades of instruction. Hence arose the drawing together of these two sorts of institutions, the college or university and the preparatory school.

The Southern Association evolved along lines similar to those which the like associations of the North and East had followed, but also found an example in a Southern State, the State of Tennessee. Here there had existed for eight years previously an organization known first as the Tennessee Association of Colleges

and Universities, later changing its name to the Tennessee Association of Colleges and Schools. This smaller Association was "projected," says a rare printed report of its proceedings, "by Prof. Charles Forster Smith, of Vanderbilt University, and Vice Chancellor (then Professor) B. L. Wiggins, of Sewanee, in August, 1887, at Sewanee." "The original object of the Association," continues the report, "was to try to bring about some degree of uniformity in requirements for admission to college." This "original object," it may be truly said, continued to be the main *raison d'être* for the State Association and was inherited by the larger interstate Association formed in 1895.

The most largely attended meeting of the Tennessee Association appears to have been that held at Wall and Mooney's School on November 7, 8, 1895, just a day later than the important meeting for the organization of the Southern Association. Eleven Tennessee institutions were represented, five being colleges, one an "institute," and five preparatory schools. The constructive work of this State Association was begun in its first year, when a series of committees, consisting of two college men and one man from some preparatory school as advisory member, were appointed to investigate and report at the next meeting of the Association as to what should be the uniform requirements for admission to college. These committees reported on work in English, mathematics, Latin, Greek, and modern languages. It may be noted that neither the natural sciences nor history was included. A glance at the titles of the papers which were submitted to the Association shows clearly that the literary and classical elements prevailed in its programs.

The work of this Association was interesting and promising; but its activities were limited to a narrow territory, the elements opposed to progress were powerful, and therefore a larger plan was conceived. The meeting of November 6, 1895, held at the Georgia School of Technology, was called by a committee appointed by the faculty of Vanderbilt University. Vanderbilt was represented by Prof. W. M. Baskervill and Chancellor Kirkland. Dr. Kirkland was shortly elected secretary and in this office continuously served as the Association's permanent administrative officer until 1908, when he yielded his place to Dr. F. W. Moore, Dean of the Academic Faculty of Vanderbilt. Dr. Moore had been very active in the councils of the Association and had done much excellent work in the preparation of papers and re-

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ports. He served as secretary until 1910, when he was stricken with a fatal illness. During the year 1910-11 Dr. Bert E. Young, of Vanderbilt, served as acting secretary, became secretary in 1911 after the death of Dr. Moore, and is still acting in that capacity.

Returning to the meeting of 1895, one is interested in reading of the other institutions which were represented—the University of the South, Mercer College, Washington and Lee University, Trinity College, Wofford College, the University of North Carolina, the Georgia School of Technology, the University of Tennessee, the University of Mississippi, Tulane University, and the University of Alabama. Among the delegates present were Profs. W. P. Trent, Edwin Mims, H. N. Snyder, James H. Dillard, and John Bell Henneman.

The purposes of the meeting were formally stated as follows:

1. To organize Southern schools and colleges for coöperation and mutual assistance.

2. To elevate the standard of scholarship and to effect uniformity of entrance requirements.

3. To give the preparatory schools the right to exist by insisting that colleges refrain from doing preparatory work.

These objects were more definitely summarized in the original constitution of the Association in the following paragraph, which has remained unchanged:

> *Section 2. Object.*—The object of this Association shall be to consider the qualifications of candidates for admission to colleges, the methods of admission, the character of the preparatory schools, the courses of study to be pursued in the colleges and schools, including their order, number, etc., as well as such other subjects as tend to the promotion of interests common to colleges and preparatory schools.

The charter members of the Association were: Vanderbilt University, University of North Carolina, University of the South, University of Mississippi, Washington and Lee University, and Trinity College.

A distinguishing feature of the new Association* was the estab-

*The title of the new Association was the "Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Southern States." Recently this has been altered to the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States, an evidence of the increasing participation in the Association of the public high schools, referred to below. In this paper the present title is used.

lishment in its by-laws of distinct standards of membership. It was not to be an organization of all "colleges," but only of those which would set for entrance certain tests which would not be less than an agreed minimum. In this way membership in the Association was made to depend upon a test of educational status, and the problem of entrance to college and many kindred questions of educational policy were subjected to corporate control. When the Association was first organized, the subjects to be accepted for entrance were limited to English, history and geography, mathematics, Latin and Greek. At the fifth meeting there was proposed the addition of German, French, and science, and this legislation was carried into effect in 1902. In 1910 an important amendment to the by-laws made more rigid the standard for admission to colleges in the Association, and in 1913 this standard was by another amendment raised still higher. Thus we have the present law of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, which represents the placing of the Southern schools which conform to it upon a basis national in character. The rule now reads:

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Fourteen units are required of all students admitted to college. Conditions are allowed to the extent of two units only, and all conditions or deficiencies should be removed before the beginning of the second year in college. College work done to remove conditions must not be counted toward a degree. Students may be admitted either on certificate or on examination, but they must in all cases comply with the above requirements as to the amount of work offered. The Association strongly recommends that all candidates be required to offer English and mathematics and that all candidates for a degree course in the college of liberal arts be required to offer in addition the necessary preparation in two foreign languages.

The Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools has strengthened its activities and increased its influence by meeting in one after another of the educational centers of the South. Frequently the meeting of the Association has been an element of the greatest importance in arousing local interest in the improvement of educational conditions. Noteworthy addresses have been delivered before these meetings and have been later published in the printed "Proceedings" of the Association. Great value attaches to some of the reports submitted to the Association, such as that presented in 1899 by Chancellor Kirkland, which was directed toward the establishing of a program for high schools, and

that of Dr. Frederick W. Moore, of Vanderbilt, and Prof. J. L. Henderson, of the University of Texas, submitted in 1910, which dealt with the administration of the system of admission to college by certificate.

The Association has interested itself in the subject matter of the school course and has kept closely in touch with those bodies which have in their care the setting of national standards. Thus for years the Association was represented in the National Committee on College Admission Requirements in English. In this connection it may be noted that the Commission on Accredited Schools, of which an account is given below, in 1913 appointed ten committees to examine, respectively, the following subjects as taught in the high schools, with recommendations as to a proper standardization of the subject matter to be included in the courses of the schools. The subjects are: English, modern languages, manual training, ancient languages, mathematics, commercial branches, history, the exact sciences, the biological sciences, and agriculture.

Among the special activities fostered by the Association, one of special interest was the establishment of a system of uniform examinations for entrance. At the tenth annual meeting Prof. P. H. Saunders, then of the University of Mississippi, submitted a report on the advisability of this plan, which received the approval of the Association. While in some respects the system of the College Entrance Examination Board, so well known and so effective in the Eastern States, served as a model for the Southern Association, on the whole the plan of administration adopted by the Uniform Entrance Examination Committee was rather different. In the former examination questions on the various subjects demanded for entrance to colleges are set by committees under the authority of the central board, the examinations are held at a fixed date under the authority of the board, and the papers are graded by committees of readers also appointed by the board. In the plan of the Southern Association only the making of the questions was undertaken by the central committee, which furnished sets of the questions to the colleges or to the schools. The holding of examinations and the grading of the questions were left to the several colleges. This in itself constituted a great weakness in the system as compared with that of the College Entrance Examination Board. It was thought necessary, moreover, to fix definitely the date for the examinations. This constituted

another great limitation upon the usefulness of the plan because of the fact that both colleges and schools in the South varied so greatly in the times of their commencements and final examinations. Through the lengthening of the terms of the schools and through the resulting tendency to a greater uniformity this particular obstacle to the use of the uniform examinations might have been gradually overcome. Yet in 1912 the examinations were discontinued. The deeper reason for the abandonment of this experiment was one which rendered the whole idea of examination for entrance far less important, the growth of the practice of admitting students to college by certificates from accredited schools.

While the older East has not been unaffected by the movement to substitute certification for examination as the test of capacity to enter upon college work, the home of the certification system has been the West; and the Southern Association has now definitely accepted this guidance. The change has come about largely through an evolution which is one of the most gratifying and encouraging within the horizon of the Southern college. The situation of the common schools in the South has so enormously improved that the relations of colleges and schools will soon be determined by the standards of the State universities with their affiliated public school system. Held back thus far by the insufficiency of the preparatory education afforded by the State, the State universities have lagged behind Vanderbilt and other private institutions in regard to the elevation of standards. Henceforth the former will lead; and as this situation has developed, it has become possible for the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools to establish a system of joint certification and inspection somewhat like that which has been adopted in the Middle West.

For the last five years the Association has worked to this end with the result that there has been created a Commission on Accredited Schools, of which Prof. Joseph S. Stewart, of the University of Georgia, has been Chairman and Prof. N. W. Walker, of the University of North Carolina, Secretary since its organization. In its reports for 1913-14 the Commission gives testimony to the good influence which its work has already begun to exert. There are now upon its accredited list two hundred and seventy-eight schools as against one hundred and fifty-two in 1913-14. The emphasis laid in the requirements of the Commission upon the need of educated teachers has begun to bear fruit. Attention

is being paid to the demand that the average number of students to the teacher shall not be too high and to the requirement that the teacher shall not have too many classes. Equipment and physical condition have been bettered. For all these changes for the better the South has a right to be thankful. It is to be hoped that the Commission will gradually pursue a more rigid policy, for the need of reform is a crying one. It is to be hoped also that the colleges as well as the schools will support the Commission, for on the part of the colleges the practice of admitting students upon certificate has often been characterized by an unfortunate laxity of administration.

This close relation to the public schools should react to the benefit of the colleges and secondary schools through the greater participation of the public high schools in the work of the Association. From the very first the attitude of the Association has been kindly. At the meeting in 1895 the Association put itself on record as being heartily sympathetic with the public school system. For many years, however, the public schools, as a rule, were unable to meet the requirements of the Association. Every year, fortunately, the number of such schools becomes less.

In the way of affiliations with national organizations, the Association has been a member of the National Conference Committee on Standards of Colleges and Secondary Schools from the inception of the latter. The members of this Conference Committee are: The New England Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools, the New England College Entrance Certificate Board, the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Middle States and Maryland, the College Entrance Examination Board, the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Southern States, the National Association of State Universities, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and the United States Commissioner of Education. The Association has also long been a member of the National Conference on Uniform Entrance Requirements in English. It has usually been represented at the annual meetings of these national organizations.

To one other very interesting expression of the indirect influence exerted by the Association must reference be made. Sometime ago, in Virginia, and later in Alabama, State Associations were formed to carry out the same ideals as those which in-

spired the work of the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools. This appearance of the State Association might seem a reversion to the condition of things before 1895, but important differences are to be observed. These more recent State organizations are, in the first place, practically branches of the larger body; and, in the second place, they have a much more positive program than the old Tennessee Association. They fix the minimum standard for entrance (though this, of course, is lower than that of the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools), and they require publicity as a part of the enforcement of these regulations. It may be that in the growth of such State Associations there lie great possibilities of usefulness.

This article is hardly to be concluded without a reference to some of the other agencies which have been responsible to a greater or less degree for the marked improvement of recent years. Reference should be made to the Southern Educational Association, which has stimulated so greatly the work of the public schools; to the Conference for Education in the South, which has served to acquaint North and South with the contributions which each can make toward national advance; to the educational committees of some religious bodies, especially that of the Methodist Church, South; but particularly to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. In the case of the last, in addition to the undoubtedly powerful economic stimulus which the Foundation, by its definitions and requirements, has held out to the colleges of the South and especially the State universities, the important information and keen criticism of its bulletins and reports have been valuable agents working toward improvement. But while giving all due recognition to this, the public should not forget the slow, steady, and still advancing work of the purely academic and entirely unendowed Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States.

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